How to deal with toxic people
Lessons from the trenches of Open Source Development

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• 39 years old
• Software engineer
• Maker
• Hobby baker
• 100% Nerd
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Entitlement

Why isn’t this obscure feature implemented already that I need for my personal workflow?

How rude of you to refuse to implement something I want!

Wow, this bug is still open, six months later? Get off your lazy 😠 and fix it already!
This crap has cost me a 12h print job, shame on you for ever releasing this!

WELL THANKS FOR NOTHING!

I just updated and nothing works anymore, THIS IS THE LAST TIME I UPDATE!
Attacks

Whoever designed this steaming pile of 😷 should be shot!

Stop writing software, you 😷

LOL, you clearly SUCK as a dev!

😊 YOU!!!
Coping strategies
First: Disengage & cool down

- Don’t answer hot-headed
- Let off steam **offline**
  - Heavy bag
  - Jumping jacks
  - Brisk walk
  - Count to 100 and back down
- Initial **stress response cycle** needs to run through
- Only then respond
Stress response cycle?

Stressor

“This is a threat!”

Fight or flight ++

Stressor acknowledged?

Carry on
Remind of realities

• Open Source = no demands but **collaboration & cooperation**
• Not just code, everything helps!
• “Patches welcome” 🙄
Remind of boundaries

- Open Source Maintainers are people and deserve respect & decency
- Make overstepping clear
- Enforce community rules (CoC)
- Refer to snarky.ca/the-social-contract-of-open-source/
Additional measures

• Don’t work on the issue (if it only affects the abuser)
• Point the abuser to the door
• Ban hammer (last resort!)
• You don’t have to accept abuse - and for the sake of the project you actually shouldn’t
How the community can help

• “This is just like it is in Open Source!” 👎
• Call out bad behaviour
• Always remember *yourself* that there is a human on the other end
Thank you for your attention!

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Slides: foosel.net/slides/pyconde2022.pdf

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